



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

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## Why Can't Madison Compromise?

**MADISON-** It has now been four months since Governor Scott Walker introduced his proposed state budget for the 2017-19 biennium and we are no closer to having a finalized budget. Although the executive office and both chambers of the State Legislature are controlled by the same party, there is continued in-fighting. Just this week, the governor threatened to veto the budget in full, which would be an unprecedented move. Wisconsinites deserve representatives who will put aside bickering and come together to craft a budget that works for everyone, not just the special interests.

Wisconsinites also deserve elected officials who will listen to their concerns. That is why I was disappointed the Joint Finance Committee (the budget writing committee) only came as far north as Spooner this year. It was important to me that my constituents had the opportunity to share their thoughts about the state budget. This is why I held eighteen listening sessions in four weeks. Thank you to everyone who came out to express concerns about the budget with me. I heard from constituents all across the 74<sup>th</sup> Assembly District, from Cornucopia to Brantwood, Drummond to Lac du Flambeau, and everywhere in between. I had upwards of 200 taxpayers in attendance. While many topics were discussed, the most significant were: transportation funding, long-term care funding and reimbursement, and education.

In Northern Wisconsin, poor infrastructure is far from being a new issue. We have driven on subpar roads and unsafe bridges for years now. Many ideas have been discussed recently, one of which includes a complete overhaul of Wisconsin's tax system to fill the gap in funding for transportation. The overhaul includes huge tax breaks for the richest, significant tax increases for many other Wisconsinites, the potential introduction of toll roads, and increased fees on electric vehicles and hybrids. Tax cuts for millionaires will not solve Wisconsin's infrastructure crisis. It is time for the Governor and the majority party to work with both sides of the aisle to create an adequate, efficient, and fair solution to the transportation revenue crisis.

As I heard from constituents at multiple listening sessions, Wisconsin is experiencing a dire shortage in long-term care staff. Long-term care staff provide the support that makes daily living

possible for thousands of citizens. Long-term care facilities are seeing high employee turnover rates due in part to low wages. This is a result of Wisconsin's low reimbursement rate for providers. Historically, Wisconsin has been a leader in providing support for seniors and people with disabilities. Wisconsin must once again become a leader in helping those in need.

Finally, many Northern Wisconsin school districts have been forced to make drastic changes due to massive cuts in the Governor's previous budgets. While the new budget proposal includes a modest increase in state aid for schools, it does not come close to making up for years of devastating cuts. Funding our local public schools is one of my top priorities. When state government fails to do this, the burden falls heavily on local taxpayers to raise money for schools through referendums.

Although I believe Wisconsin can do much better, there are also encouraging signs in this budget proposal. Increased state aid to counties and municipalities, as well as new funding for rural broadband expansion and increases in aid per pupil, are all encouraging policies. As we draw closer to the passage of the budget, I am hopeful that my colleagues will come together with a common sense approach to fund Wisconsin's programs and services in a timely fashion.

Again, I would like to thank everyone who attended a listening session. I've said this before, but it bears repeating: my most important job is listening to you. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about issues relating to state government. I can be reached at 888-534-0074 or [Rep.Meyers@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Rep.Meyers@legis.wisconsin.gov).

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